

New Jersey Lead in Drinking Water Issues Summary

Talking Points:

- In March the City of Newark alerted New Jersey and EPA that they have elevated lead levels in drinking water at 30 of their schools.
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has taken the lead on working with Newark Schools as they work to test all schools, and EPA has been providing guidance to NJDEP as questions come up.
- To date most schools have been retested and any taps with elevated levels of lead are not being used for drinking.
- In addition, Passaic Valley Water Commission (PVWC) reported that their most recent monitoring shows they exceed the action level for lead, in this water system serving 300,000.
- Region 2 has performed a compliance review of Passaic Valley Water Commission and determined that they have taken all necessary steps in response to the action level exceedance. The Region is also in the process of planning or conducting reviews of Brick Township, and Bally's Park Place. The purpose will be to make sure steps are being taken as per the regulations and that any violations are addressed.
- Region 2 is also conducting file reviews to assure states are implementing the Lead and Copper Rule.

Background:

Lead in School Drinking Water – Served by Municipal Water Systems

- Newark – On March 7, 2016 Newark City Schools notified NJDEP that their independent testing showed elevated levels of lead in drinking water taps in 30 schools. The following day NJDEP asked for EPA assistance and worked with Newark to shut off taps and provide bottled water to schools, until follow-up sampling could be conducted. NJDEP has been working with Newark to retest all schools and testing is almost complete. EPA has been working with the State to assure proper follow-up sampling is completed at all schools using the EPA 3Ts Guidance.
- Other NJ Schools – The Region has a longstanding program of working with School Districts to voluntarily implement the 3Ts guidance and we are currently working directly with Bayonne and Camden. Region 2 has worked with: Paterson, Eatontown, Irvington, New Brunswick, Trenton, Jersey City, Weehawken, Union City and Atlantic City school districts.
- On April 6, 2016 Governor Christie announced that the State would appropriate 10 million dollars to assure that all NJ Schools are tested for lead and to address lead paint issues. NJDEP has informed EPA that they expect a regulation to be finalized in July that would be administered by the NJ Department of Education and require all schools to test.

Passaic Valley Water Commission– Serves 300,000 People including City of Paterson

- Passaic Valley Water Commission exceeded the Action Level in 2015, with a 90th percentile level of 17 part per billion. Before that they had 5 years of results below the Action level. They have completed public education and shared lead tap results with households tested. They have offered lead testing for all its consumers and offered to replace lead service lines at/below cost for any customer that requests.

- Historically Passaic Valley Water Commission has relied on ph/alkalinity adjustment for corrosion control due to limitations presented by the uncovered finished water reservoirs. They would like to add orthophosphate, but can only do that after they have replaced the reservoirs.
- Passaic Valley Water Commission is under a State Administrative Consent Order that requires uncovered reservoirs to be eliminated and also includes a phased approach for installing corrosion control inhibitor.
- As part of the Region 2 strategy to review Lead and Copper Rule Compliance, EPA staff conducted a detailed review of Passaic Valley Water Commission's compliance in March and we determined that the water system is taking all necessary steps to respond to the action level exceedance.

Brick Township MUA – Serves 80,000 People - This large water system currently exceeds lead AL. They have reportedly conducted all required follow-up actions but Region 2 will conduct a detailed on site compliance review in September 2016.

Bally's Park Place – Public Water System that serves 6000 in Atlantic City NJ - This is a medium water system that recently exceeded lead AL. The State has required that they perform public education and Region 2 has sent an information collection request to the water system and is currently performing a detailed review of the response to determine if all necessary steps have been taken.

Morristown Hospital – This Hospital with its own water system had a corrosion control treatment failure and subsequently exceeded lead AL. NJDEP has required the hospital to provide bottled water and is taking further enforcement action.

Small Water Systems Exceeding AL – There are 23 small water systems including 8 Schools, with their own water systems that are exceeding lead AL. The Region has sent information collection request letters to all schools and will be performing on site compliance reviews of a sampling of the other small water systems once reviews of the larger systems are completed.

Blood Lead Levels

- Newark will test up to 17,000 children for lead after elevated levels were found in the drinking water at nearly half of the schools. Testing will start with 2,000 toddlers who attend early childhood centers. A specific date hasn't been set yet to get blood samples from the children.
- The state of New Jersey reported 3,398 new cases of children less than six years old with elevated blood-lead levels above 5 µg/dL in 2015. The incidence rate for the state is 19 (per 1,000 children tested). The total number of children tested during 2015 was 175,668. NJ ranks number 7 in the country for the number of children with elevated blood-lead levels at the new CDC reference level of 5 µg/dL.
- Newark reported 417 new cases of children less than six years old with elevated blood-lead levels above 5 µg/dL in 2015. The incidence rate for Newark, NJ, is the highest in the state at 29 (per 1,000 children tested). The total number of children tested in Newark during 2015 was 14,371.

Questions and Answers:

Do you think that every school in NJ should be tested for lead in drinking water? *I think it is prudent to test as many schools as possible, to ensure that our children are drinking safe water, we therefore support the efforts of NJ to require it.*

Is the drinking water in Newark Schools safe? *The taps that showed elevated lead levels have been shut off and the effected schools are being supplied bottled water for drinking and cooking. Taps have also been shut off at any additional schools tested since March that showed elevated levels.*

What assistance did EPA provide to the City of Newark? *We worked with NJDEP to develop a sampling plan based on EPA's guidance to sample all schools and we worked with Newark and NJDEP as they implement that plan.*